Ensuring that communication takes place in natural, everyday situations

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Article 11 in the series Facilitating communication in people who have visual impairment and additional needs. All the articles are available to download from my website at

http://ianpbell.wordpress.com/communication-in-vi-children/

A list of all the articles in the series is provided on the website.

This article is based closely on a document used to support the Communication Policy adopted at RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning. As Lead Speech and Language Therapist there, I took the lead in writing the original document in 2010.

For further information about RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning, go to www.rnib.org.uk/pearscentre

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Many people with visual impairment and additional needs do not readily generalise: they may acquire a skill

- in one setting but fail to use it anywhere else
- with one facilitator, but fail to use it with another
- at one time of day, but fail to use it at any other time.

Unless the difficulty with generalisation is addressed, there is a considerable risk that such people will learn no more than a set of unconnected skills they cannot use in their everyday lives.

Facilitators need to promote skills that are functional (Jordan, 2001). This will ensure that the person has a natural reason to communicate (Prizant et al., 2006), and that activities are meaningful to the person.

Facilitators also need to use natural, everyday situations (Wilcox & Shannon, 1998), as this is where communication is best facilitated (Andersen-Wood and Smith, 1997; Silver, 2005), and where it is required in everyday life.

Thus, if we are to facilitate functional communication skills that people with visual impairment and additional needs can use regardless of the immediate situation, support needs to be provided in all situations, at all times. No single facilitator can provide this support; it needs to be provided at all times by all those who come into contact with each person.

References


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